

A recent study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that over 70 million Americans under 65 were uninsured for at least some time during the last 2 years. This is unfortunate enough, but the statistics are even more alarming when we look at the Hispanic community. In the last 2 years, over half the Hispanic population under 65 has gone without health insurance for some time. In California, half of the Hispanic population is currently uninsured.

We cannot ignore the problem as a country, and I certainly cannot ignore it as a Californian. More Hispanics live in California than any other State, and they contribute to the State's economy and culture in countless ways. But there remains a huge disparity between the Hispanic population and the rest of the population when it comes to the accessibility to health insurance and health problems. Studies consistently show that Hispanics suffer disproportionately from diabetes, obesity, HIV/AIDS and asthma.

We as policy makers need to commit ourselves to closing this gap. At a time when the economy has soured and the American families are feeling the effects, we need to bolster long-standing programs which have served Americans well. Medicaid is one of those programs. Instead of the current administration's proposals for tax cuts that will pad the pockets of the rich but will do little to shore up the programs that have served Americans admirably during times of economic downturn, the administration then turns around and tells our Nation's governors that there is no money to shore up these programs.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

AMERICA'S SHARED SACRIFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, Congressional Daily reports today that in a speech to the bankers, Majority Leader TOM DELAY said that "nothing is more important in the face of a war than cutting taxes."

Not only does that defy the history of great leaders in the Western world who understood the necessity of harboring our resources in times of uncertainty and times of war, but it also defies what the American community expects at a time of war.

□ 1745

That is the notion of a shared sacrifice. At a time when we are on the eve of sending our young men and

women in harm's way, we have to think about what the contribution is of the rest of us. We understand the implications of this war in terms of costs are now said it could exceed \$100 billion, but we do not know that, because the war has not been fought yet. We also understand that there is going to have to be a long-term commitment in Iraq after the war, and we do not have any idea of what that cost is going to be.

We know that, in fact, these costs, whatever they are, are not in the budget as submitted by the President of the United States, nor are they in the budget that is being formulated by the committees in the House and the Senate, but what this does suggest is that this tax cut and when we add to them the tax cuts that the President has proposed, ending with the taxation on dividends by providing huge amounts of tax free income for the wealthiest people in this country, what it suggests is when the bill comes due for this war, when the \$5 trillion debt comes due because of the spending and because of the war and because of the Bush economy, that one group of Americans will not have to participate in that shared sacrifice. Those individuals, because of these tax cuts, will live in a tax free world.

So when the interest mounts on the debt year after year, when we have seen in a matter of 2 short years going from almost a \$5 trillion surplus to a \$2 trillion deficit, when we see the deficit reestimated into the hundreds of millions of dollars within a matter of months, apparently our colleague the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) and the President believe that somehow the wealthiest Americans in this country should not share in that sacrifice; they should not be burdened with the responsibility of helping to pay that back.

That will be left to people who earn their income through wages. They will continue to be taxed. They will continue to pay high rates of Social Security taxes, but the wealthy will not. They will escape that.

No, that is not the most important thing in the face of war. It cannot be cutting taxes. It cannot be how this country works its way through that war. It is more importantly how we make the decision to go to war. The President has offered a number of rationales for going to war. Most of them have been stripped away in the debate that is taking place in the international community, in the debate that is taking place in this country.

We have seen evidence offered and the evidence falls apart time and again. We have seen connections trying to be made between the war on terrorism and Iraq. The evidence has not been sustained, and yet as we proceed into that war the one thing that is on the gentleman from Texas' (Mr. DELAY) mind is cutting taxes. I think it defies what we know this country has done in the past when we have en-

gaged in these conflicts and the necessity of what must be done, and I would hope that once again we would understand that the burden must be shared across American society because there are those who will be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice and that will be their lives and their futures in pursuit of this war should the President decide to go forward.

Clearly those who are at home must continue to engage in the kind of effort to pull this Nation through this period of time, and so we cannot embrace the philosophy of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) that somehow the most important thing that we can do is to cut taxes and our most important obligation is somehow to tell the wealthiest people in America that they will not share in that sacrifice, they will not be there when the bill comes due for future generations.

AUTISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I have with me today a box, and on this box I am not sure my colleagues can see this, but there is 50 to 100 pictures of children who are autistic, and in the box I have in back of my office I have probably close to 1,000 letters from parents who have autistic children who believe their children became autistic because they received vaccinations that contained mercury.

We all know mercury is a toxic substance, and we know that we should not have it around us, but we have, as a matter of fact, been vaccinating our children with many micrograms of mercury in each vaccination for probably the last 20 years, and as we increase the number of vaccines that the children were being inoculated with, the amount of mercury that they were being confronted with went up as well, and as a result, we have gone from one in 10,000 children who are autistic to one in 200 children that are autistic. That is a fifty-fold increase.

Soon what I am going to be doing, Mr. Speaker, is each night I am going to be coming down here and reading to the American people and my colleagues letters from these families telling of their child becoming autistic, when it happened and how it happened so that my colleagues and the American people will really know what is going on.

Many of the pharmaceutical companies do not want this to happen because they are concerned about the liability that they might incur. We have what is called the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund, which if handled properly could deal with most of these children and their families, but unfortunately, the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund, which was created not only to protect the pharmaceutical companies but to help these children in a

nonadversarial way by getting money to take care of their damaged bodies and minds, has not been administered properly, but we are working on that now. Until we get a resolution of that problem, we will be down here every night or every other night reading these letters.

This is a letter from a man named Scott Bono and his wife is Laura Bono, and they tell about their child and how their child became autistic after he received vaccines. Now they have done a mercury toxicity test on their son which shows that he has quite a bit of mercury in his body, and the way he got that mercury into his body was through these vaccinations. They say in this letter, "When Jackson was first diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder at 20 months old, he had just experienced a four-month regression beginning days after his August 9, 1990 shots. He received HiB shot, with 25 micrograms of mercury, on July 25." And 2-weeks later he received on August 9 a DT shot with 25 micrograms of mercury in it. He had received, prior to that, 75 micrograms of mercury from other shots, and the boy became autistic shortly thereafter.

The parents were not aware of and did not get their child into what was called the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund, which has a 3-year statute of limitations, which means that if they did not get into it within 3 years of finding out he was autistic and they believe the cause was vaccines that they could not get into the fund. We have thousands of families that were not aware of the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund, who never applied, and those people have been left out in the cold.

Let me tell my colleagues the results of just this one family's problem.

Since he became autistic, their medical expenses have cost \$578,980. Their insurance companies have paid \$306,000 of that, but including food and everything else that they are providing for this boy for his special needs, it is costing them \$35,000 in after tax dollars to take care of this child, and when we add all this up, it is over \$600,000 in medical needs and therapy and food for this boy. Actually, they are in a very difficult financial situation because of that.

We have families that have sold their homes, have gone bankrupt, have borrowed money until they are about to go bankrupt to take care of their children's needs, and those people are confident, as I am, that their child was damaged by the mercury in these vaccines.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have got to do something about that. We have to either change the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund to allow these people to get in there where their child and his problem is going to be reviewed by a special master, and if there is merit to their claim, this Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund should take care of that. If we do not get that, then the

next thing we ought to do is allow them to be able to go to court to sue the pharmaceutical companies.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I will be back here tomorrow night and I appreciate the Chair being liberal with his time. We have got to solve these problems for these kids. We cannot leave them out in the cold. The President said he was going to leave no child behind, and we should not leave these children behind.

GASOLINE PRICES AT THEIR HIGHEST IN HISTORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, last weekend when I was home in Oregon I noted that gasoline prices have reached the highest level in history, and I know that my State was not alone. We apparently have the fourth highest prices in the United States. Other States are even higher, and I assume that records were set everywhere.

That might be well and good if it was all due to free market forces and the underlying cost of doing business, but I fear it is not.

We have been through this before. During the first Persian Gulf War, Desert Storm, we saw a huge run-up in oil and diesel prices and aviation fuel which caused a tremendous amount of dislocation in the economy, but the economy was nowhere near as fragile as it is today. Then we found out a little bit later that the oil companies had taken advantage of the war, war profiteering. They had, in fact, raised their prices far in excess of the underlying costs of crude and any other additional costs they might have incurred because of the war in Iraq.

Now here we are a decade later. Again, it appears that the United States will soon be at war in Iraq, and we are seeing record prices at the pump, and again, they are talking about the underlying price of crude and the instability of demand, but the increases at the pump and the increases for the aviation industry and the increases for the truckers far, far, far exceed the increases in the underlying costs of crude, and plus, many of these oil companies are selling themselves their own crude oil or they have hedged the price or they have special deals with the OPEC cartel.

No, plain and simple, they have begun war profiteering this time before the war has started. It is time for Congress to take action.

The economy is weak. Three hundred and eight thousand people lost their job last month. A number of airlines are teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, and a number of them say that if a war happens and fuel goes up any more, costs them \$180 million per penny, they will not be in Chapter 11 reorganization bankruptcy; they will be insolvent and out of business, cost-

ing tens of thousands more jobs and more harm to the economy, all so a few multinational oil companies can squeeze excess profits out of American airlines and families and truckers.

The President needs to take action. He could release fuel from the National Petroleum Reserve, the oil reserve, but he has chosen not to do that. So I have introduced a bill to give him more specific direction to give him authority once held by President Richard Nixon to stabilize the price of fuel with a fair rate of return to these oil companies and making them justify a run-up in price beyond a price that has prevailed a year ago today, and secondly, to have the President draw down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in order to help drive down prices, mitigate supply, require the oil companies now and in the future to maintain minimum inventory levels so they cannot cry wolf and jack up the price every year when they switch from home heating oil to gasoline and all those things they love to do and then they have a refinery fire, nothing anyone could ever expect.

Ban the export of Alaska oil. We are going to hear arguments we should allow drilling in ANWR, but guess what, all the Alaska oil can and probably will be exported because this Congress, against my will, lifted the ban on the export of Alaska oil.

Finally, this administration is all for free trade. OPEC is not free trade. That cartel, those people, Saudis and others, are conspiring to drive up the price of oil, setting the price of oil in violation of all the agreements of the World Trade Organization. I am not a big fan of that organization, but this administration, who loves it and wants to expand its authority, should use the authority it has to object to that price fixing. It violates all of the tenets of GATT and the World Trade Organization.

□ 1800

So it is time for strong action here in Congress and at the White House to stop the war profiteering, the price gouging, driving more Americans out of work, bankrupting the airlines, idling trucks and the commerce of this country, all so a few multinational oil companies can run record profits for the next couple of quarters.

Choice seems pretty easy to me. We will see what my colleagues and the President think.

APPOINTING A SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HUNGER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, last week I wrote U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan requesting he appoint a special envoy to respond to the hunger crisis throughout the world. U.N. special envoys have been appointed to respond to